

## **Cultures and Contexts: Indigenous Australia**

**CORE-UA 536**

**Fred Myers**

212 998 8555 fred.myers@nyu.edu

25 Waverly Place, Room 602

Department of Anthropology

New York University

**Fall 2014**

Silver 207

Course Description: The indigenous people of Australia have long been the subject of interest and imagination by outsiders for their cultural formulations of kinship, ritual, art, gender, and politics and they have entered into representations as distinctively "Other"- whether in negative or positive formulations of the "Primitive." These representations -- in feature films about them such as Walkabout and Rabbit Proof Fence, in New Age Literature, or museum exhibitions -- are now also in dialogue with their own forms of cultural production. At the same time, Aboriginal people have struggled to reproduce themselves and their traditions in their own terms, asserting their right to forms of cultural autonomy and self-determination. In this course, we will explore a range of Aboriginal Australian forms of social being, ranging historically and geographically. Through the examination of ethnographic texts, art, novels, autobiographies, film and other media, we will consider the ways in which identity is challenged and constructed.

### Requirements:

Students will be expected to do the assigned readings, and to attend lectures and recitation sections. Additionally, you will be visiting and reviewing an exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History about cell-phone videos from Northeast Arnhem Land. Required readings include books, to be purchased at the NYU Bookstore, and articles that are posted electronically on the course NYU Classes site for you to download. The written assignments will be 4 short (4-5 page) papers on topics handed out during the semester. [These are worth 20% of the grade each. The remaining 20 % will be derived from participation in sections and 10% for the review of the installation at AMNH. There will also occasional short quizzes in class. Extra credit is possible for reviews of any of the Indigenous Australian films screened at the Margaret Mead Film Festival at the AMNH, October 23-26.

In order to avoid disturbance and distractions, please turn off cellphones, and you should not get up to leave class to pick up calls or messages! Unless there is a special need, laptop computers should also be turned off. Failure to observe these rules will result in the reduction of grade for participation.

Required Books: (to be purchased at the NYU Bookstore)

Morgan, Sally My Place.

Morphy, Howard Aboriginal Art

Myers, Fred Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self

Pilkington, Doris. Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence.

An important resource for this class is the groundbreaking 7-part series, produced for Australian television by Indigenous Producers Rachel Perkins and Daren Dale, *The First Australians*.

The films are available in Australia by podcast, at Avery Fisher Media Center in Bobst Library, and I have posted them on NYU Classes. They also have a fabulous accompanying website that articulates a timeline and topics of Indigenous Australian history [<http://www.programs.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/content/>]

Assignments:

### **Week 1 -- September 2**

#### **Introduction: Indigenous People, Settler Society**

- James Cook: excerpt from *Explorations*, pp. 82-85 (CLASSES)
- Deborah Rose: "The Saga of Captain Cook: Remembrance and Morality." In Attwood and McGowan, *Telling Stories*: 61-79. (CLASSES)
- W.E.H. Stanner: "Caliban Discovered." 41-66. *White Man Got No Dreaming*. (CLASSES)

Optional Reading:

- Ian Anderson, "Introduction: the Aboriginal critique of colonial knowing." (in Grossman, *Blacklines*), pp 17-24. (CLASSES)

Lecture -- Bernard Smith, excerpts from European Vision and the South Pacific.

Required Background: *They Have Come to Stay*, episode 1. *First Australians* (CLASSES)

In class film: *Babakiueria*

### **Week 2 -- September 9**

#### **Classical Aboriginal Society: Cosmology, People, and Place**

- W.E.H. Stanner (1953): "The Dreaming" (in Stanner, *The Dreaming and other Essays*: 57-72
- Myers: *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self*. pp 1-102.

### **Week 3 -- September 16**

#### **Classical Aboriginal Society: Myth, Land, and Identity**

- Myers: *Pintupi Country*, pp 103-180
- Myers: "The Cultural Basis of Pintupi Politics." *Mankind* 1980. (CLASSES)

### **Week 4 -- September 23 (September 25-6 Rosh Hashana)**

#### **Culture, Contact, Change, Continuity**

- Myers: *Pintupi Country*: pp. 219-285

- Myers (1989): "Truth, Beauty and Acrylic Painting" *Visual Anthropology* (CLASSES)

Film: -- *Benny and the Dreamers*. Director Ivo Burum.

Optional Reading:

-Myers (2004): "Unsettled Business: Acrylic Painting, Tradition, and Aboriginal Being." *Visual Anthropology* 17: 247-271. (CLASSES)

Optional Background: *There is No Other Law*. Episode 4 *First Australians*. (CLASSES)

### **Week 5 – September 30**

#### **History and Settlement/Invasion: Coranderrk (Victoria)**

-Ian Anderson, "Introduction: the Aboriginal critique of colonial knowing." (in Grossman, *Blacklines*), pp 17-24.

-Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, Chapter 1, 2

-Diane Barwick (1974): "And the Lubras are Ladies Now"(in Faye Gale, Ed. *Women's role in aboriginal society*: 51-63.)

Screening:

-*First Australians Episode 3, "Freedom for our Lifetime*. Dir. Rachel Perkins. (60 mins)

### **First Paper due October 2**

### **Week 6 – October 7**

#### **History: State Policies and Aboriginal Rights**

- Jack Horner and Marcia Langton (1987): "The Day of Mourning." (CLASSES)

-Tim Rowse (1987), "Assimilation and After". In AW Martin and Tim Rowse (eds), *Australians from, 1939*: 133-149) (CLASSES)

Film: *Freedom Ride*. (1993) Dir. Rachel Perkins. (55 mins)

Background: *Freedom for our lifetime*. Episode 3 *First Australians*. (CLASSES)

### **Week 7 – October 14 (Fall Recess)**

#### **Mediating History and Memory**

- Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, Chapter 10: "Documents of Change." Pp 353-368.

- Clips from Culture Victoria website on possum-skin cloak project, kangaroo-teeth jewelry making; Joy Murphy on her uncle, William Barak.

<http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/themes/indigenous-culture/>

### **Week 8 – October 21**

#### **Art: The Circulation and Exhibition of Indigenous Culture** (Mead Festival)

-Morphy: *Aboriginal Art*, intro plus chapters 1, 3, 4.

-Dussart: "A Body Painting in Translation." In Banks and Morphy, eds. *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*: 186-202. (CLASSES)

Optional Reading: -Morphy: "Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery" (CLASSES)

**special assignment October 23-26**

- All Students are asked to visit the American Museum of Natural History during the period of the Margaret Mead Film Festival (which features several films involving Indigenous Australia) to view and review an installation about cellphone videos in North East Arnhem Land. This installation should be available for viewing from Oct. 23-26. More details about visiting AMNH will be provided in class.

**Week 9 – October 28**

**Art: Culture, Survival, Visibility**

- Morphy: *Aboriginal Art*, chapters 6, 7, 8
- Michael Dodson: "The End in the Beginning: Re(de)fining Aboriginality" (in Grossman, *Blacklines*: 25-42. CLASSES)

**Week 10 – November 4**

**Identity: Who/What is Aboriginal?**

- Philip Jones (1991), "Namatjira: Traveler in Two Worlds" (In J. Hardy, et al, *The Heritage of Namatjira*: 97-136. (CLASSES)
- Jeremy Beckett: "Walter Newton's World."
- Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, chapter 9
- Sally Morgan, *My Place* (begin)

Optional reading: -Ian Anderson: "Black bit, white bit." (in Grossman, *Blacklines*: 43-51. (CLASSES)

Film: *Two Bob Mermaid*. Director Darlene Johnson.

**Second Essay due, November 6.**

**Week 11 – November 11**

**Whose History? – Identity, Aboriginality, and The Stolen Generations**

- Morgan, *My Place* (complete)
- Bain Attwood, "'Learning about the Truth'." (In Attwood and McGowan, eds. *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory*: 183-212) (CLASSES)

Film: *Stolen Generations*. Director Darlene Johnson.

**Week 12 -- November 18 (Lima Nov. 19)**

**Imaging Indigeneity: Self-Determination**

- Doris Pilkington (1998), *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* (CLASSES)
- Faye Ginsburg (1991): "Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village" *Cultural Anthropology* 6: 92-112) (CLASSES)

Film: *Rabbit Proof Fence*

**Third Essay Due November 20**

**Week 13 – November 25** (Thanksgiving on Thursday)

**Imaging Indigeneity: Self-Determination** (completion)

- Doris Pilkington (1998) *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* (CLASSES)

-Faye Ginsburg, “Native Intelligence: A Short history of debates on Indigenous Media and the Ethnographic.” In Banks and Ruby, eds. *A Short History of Visual Anthropology*: 234-255.

**Week 14 – December 2** (no class Thursday?, AAA)

**Indigenous Futures: Indigenizing/Mixing/Circulating**

-Ginsburg and Myers, “A History of Aboriginal Futures” 2006 (CLASSES)

Film *Djakhiarr vs. the King*

**Week 15 – December 9**

**Final Essay Due December 9**